

Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.²² Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,²³ that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.²⁴ “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.²⁵ I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.²⁷ And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

²⁸“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice²⁹ and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.³⁰ By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. (NIV84)

Theme: The Hour is Coming.

1. Jesus Christ will come to judge the world.
2. Christ judges on the basis of his grace through faith

Today is Last Judgment Sunday, as you know. It is the day out of the church year when we specifically focus on Christ’s second coming. Last month we began the topic of “End Times” for our Thursday Bible Classes. The topic of the end of the world is quite popular. This year it’s getting a lot of play because December 21st, 2012 is when the Mayan calendar ends—so many people think that will be the end of the world. Many times the people of the world look upon those who warn others that the end is near as if they are nothing by crazy, misguided, religious quacks.

But in our text today Jesus himself tells us that the hour is coming. He will come to judge the world. But this is not a judgment we have to be afraid of. For Christ will judge on the basis on his grace through faith.

Christ is coming. And he is coming soon. Jesus tells us so. Twice in our text for today Jesus tells us that the time is coming. **I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God.** And actually the Greek doesn’t even say time—it says hour. Christ knows the specific hour when he will return. So when is it? He doesn’t tell us. In fact he says, **No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.** Not even Jesus, in his state of humiliation knew. Therefore man does not know and cannot know. But God does gives us indicates that his coming is near. He gives us signs in nature, like earthquakes, famines, and medical epidemics. He gives us signs in society—wars and rumors of wars, and an increase in wickedness. He also gives us signs in the church—false teachers, and Christians who fall away from the one true faith. Just think of some of those signs for a little bit. When do you think the end could come? It could come at any moment! Or not. It could come in an hour, next week, a few years from now, or a thousand years from now. But the point is that Jesus could come at any time—in fact right now he is coming. In Jesus last recorded words of the Bible, in Revelation 22, he says, **I am coming soon.**

But what exactly is Jesus coming for? We know of course. The Last Day of the world is often referred to as, “Judgment Day.” It is the day when Christ will return and judge the world. The Father gave Jesus the authority to do so. **The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.** And a few verses later, **he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.** But that is not all—those who are dead will also be raised to life. He says in verse 28, **a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice.** When Christ comes on the Last Day, the bodies of all who have died, whether they were buried in graves, at sea, cremated and scattered, eaten by wild animals, or whatever—all bodies will be given life. And then they will be judged.

Are you prepared? Are you ready for Christ's return? It's pretty easy not to be. Christ did say he is coming soon, but that was 2000 years ago, so if he is coming soon, then where is he? We tend to doubt that he will come again—or least not in our lifetime. So we become lax in our preparation. We begin to place the things of this world ahead of God in our lives. God's Word gets pushed aside for work, children, or your own enjoyment. You become too busy for God and his Word. Instead of preparing your hearts, you are too busy doing other things. What will Christ find you doing when he returns on the Last Day? Are you afraid of Judgment Day? No one really wants to face judgment. Yet, that's exactly what will happen. When you take a look at yourself, are you afraid? Do you secretly tell yourself you don't want Christ to return because you are afraid of judgment? You wish that God would give you more time to get your spiritual life in order? You just need a little bit more time to figure a few things out. Soon you will get your priorities straight. Soon you will be prepared—but not yet. So in the meantime, you hope that Christ stays away for a time.

But Christ is already on his way to judge the world. And there is nothing scary about his judgment. And least for us who believe. For we know who is judging us. The person coming down to judge us is not some short-tempered aloof supreme being. He is not one who doesn't understand those who he is judging. He is the God-man Jesus Christ. He knows what it is like living in this sin-filled world. He is not filled with rage and hate, but with love and mercy. And he wants all to be saved. And he says this about his judgment, **By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.** When Jesus judges he does what the Father pleases. And it was the Father who was pleased to send his Son to suffer, die, and rise again from the dead. So God was pleased to save us. This is our judge. We have nothing to fear.

So Christ's coming is near. He is coming to judge the world. But what exactly is the basis for that judgment?

Jesus says in verse 24, **I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.** Those who

believe in Jesus Christ will not be condemned. Because God sent his Son to live, suffer, and die for us we will not die eternally. He has paid the price for our sins. He suffered hell so that we would not. He rose so that we may live. By God's grace alone, the work of Christ become ours. Through him we have passed over from eternal death to eternal life. We receive these blessings through faith. And this faith the Holy Spirit has also given us.

But faith in what? In Jesus. But what does it mean to believe in Jesus? The background to our text today is that some Jews didn't believe that Jesus was God and was equal to the Father. So Jesus explained to them that he and the Father are one. They are equal. For if they both do the same things, then they are the same. If one is honored when the other one is honored and vice versa, then they are both God. So those who believe that Jesus is God and the world's one and only Savior will be saved.

Then the opposite must also stand true. Those who don't believe will be condemned. They have no faith to receive the blessings Christ won for them. And their lack of faith condemns them. All those who don't believe he is God or that he is lesser than the Father will not be saved. All those who believe that we must add something, somehow, to his work, will not be saved. Their sins will count against them. And they will get what their sins deserve—eternal punishment with the devil.

But what about verse 29? **Those who have done good will rise to live.** I thought eternal life depends on the work of Christ alone, which receive through faith? I thought it didn't depend anything we do. Jesus made that clear in verse 24. It may seem otherwise when you first glance at verse 29. But then we realize who they are who do good works. Only believers do good works. Only they can follow God's commands out of love and thanks to him. Because their actions are washed in the blood of Christ, what they do is pleasing to God. So those who have done good will rise to eternal life. But this is not because they have done good, but simply rather, those who have done good are believers in Christ. For our faith results in good works. Than the opposite is also true. Unbelievers cannot do good works. The writer to the Hebrews said, **without faith it is impossible to please God.** Whatever an unbeliever does, it's a sin. He can not

please God because nothing he does is done through faith in him and out of thanks for everything Christ has done for him.

Jesus says **those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.** You have done evil in this life. You do evil everyday. Does that mean you will be condemned on Judgment Day? The Greek doesn't just say do evil—but rather practice evil. Those that are unbelievers practice evil. To practice evil is to work at it, to relish and cherish it, to want it and not want to be rid of it. It is to follow the ways of the world at the expense of what God wants you to do. It is essentially the denial of saving faith. It is rejecting God and his grace.

To practice evil is to live in unrepentant sin. It is to do something that God does not want your to do. It is to continue in that sin, and not want to change your sinful ways. Those who do not obey God's word—who choose the ways of the sinful flesh over God's Word, will not be saved. Their actions prove their lack of faith. They chose themselves over Christ. And when Christ comes, the final judgment will not be a pleasant one.

You may have done evil from time to time. You will do evil in the future. But you don't practice it. You try to obey God's commands. But there are times you slip and stumble. So you go to God in repentance. You kneel before him with a humble heart and confess that you deserve nothing but his wrath and punishment. And you know that he forgives you. Through the work of Christ, God does not count your sins against you. That is what it means to be prepared.

Those who believe in Christ for forgiveness are prepared. So we prepare ourselves and we prepare others. We do this by worshiping regularly. By reading the Bible at home. By studying his Word in Bible Class. By kneeling before God in repentance and knowing that he forgives us. And we lead others to do the same. So we share the gospel with them. We encourage them to come to worship with us, to study God's Word. We encourage them to leave their life of sin, to cast off their sinful natures and turn to God. We don't want to waste our time. For Christ could come at any time. Or, we or someone we love could face our own personal judgment day before Christ comes. So we prepare our hearts, and the hearts of others through the gospel.

Christ is coming soon to judge the world! But there is no reason to be afraid. It will be a wonderful time for all believers. We long for it; we wait for it in eager anticipation for our Savior to take us to heaven. And we can say along with the Apostle John when Jesus said he is coming soon, **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.**